
LETTERS
from *S*pain



BY

Joe Dallet

American Volunteer,

To HIS WIFE

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LETTERS
FROM
SPAIN

BY
JOE DALLEY
AMERICAN VOLUNTEER, TO HIS WIFE

INTRODUCTORY ARTICLES BY

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EARL BROWDER

TIM BUCK

STEVE NELSON

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JOE DALLEY

1907-1937

JOE DALLEY was born February 18, 1907. His family was well to do, and conservative in political and social outlook.

As a boy he went to a private school, Woodmere Academy, and to Lawrence High School. He entered Dartmouth College at the age of 18. He studied there two and a half years but, impatient with what a formal academic education had to offer, left in his junior year.

He went into the insurance business, and was not satisfied. He took a trip to Europe, and returned to business for a while. He served for some time in Madison House.

He went to work, finally, as a longshoreman, not because of economic pressure, but because he felt then that failure to earn his living by productive labor was to be a parasite, and that he needed to do something in the labor struggle. From that time on Joe was a worker, and he soon became a leader of workers. He joined the Communist Party in 1929. He was a steel organizer before the days of the C.I.O., when it was many times harder and more dangerous to organize steel workers.

When the fascist attack on the Spanish Republic began, he volunteered to go and fight for democracy in Spain.

Joe Dallet was killed in action during an advance of the International Brigade, on October 17, 1937.

TRIBUTES TO JOE DALLET

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

Chairman, Communist Party, U.S.A.

IT CAME as a great shock to me to learn that Comrade Joe Dallet had been killed in action in Spain. He was a real fighter and his death is a deep loss to the revolutionary movement and a personal grief to his host of friends.

Joe was one of those courageous militants who built the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union (Trade Union Unity League) in the face of steel trust gunmen and sluggers. He was a trail-blazer for the big C.I.O. campaign that has at last brought the steel workers into the folds of organized labor.

In the class struggle in this country, Joe was always on the front line, and it was quite in accord with his militant revolutionary spirit that he should go to Spain to help beat back the hordes of a barbarous fascism. Such a brave and loyal fighter is a credit to the Communist Party, of which he was long a member. It is revolutionary fighters like Dallet who will write the epitaph of capitalism.

BY EARL BROWDER

General Secretary, Communist Party, U.S.A.

EVERYONE who knew Joe Dallet will feel a keen personal loss in the news of his death during the latest offensive of the Spanish people's army.

He was a fitting representative of those 3,000 fine young

North-Americans who have given themselves completely to the task of stopping fascism in Spain before it engulfs the capitalist world.

His death, like that of those other splendid Americans who went before him, further hardens us to the realities of the tremendous tasks still before us.

"They shall not pass!"

BY TIM BUCK

General Secretary, Communist Party of Canada

ALL friends of Canada's Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in Spain and all lovers of democracy will feel a deep sense of loss at the report that Comrade Joe Dallet, political commander of the battalion, has been killed in action on the Saragossa front.

Joe Dallet was a Communist. As an active trade unionist and working class leader he realized that defense of democracy, today, involves an implacable struggle against fascism on all fronts and for himself he chose that front which is the most nearly immediately decisive: he made his way to Spain.

Joe Dallet was an American. His death in action with our Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion is one more seal to the sacred bond of international comradeship which binds together our fellow Canadians, Americans, Europeans, workers, poets, artists and soldiers in that proud army of volunteers whose deeds have made their very own the deathless shout of embattled democracy: "They shall not pass!"

We join our comrades in the Communist Party of the United States in dipping our banners before the grave of Comrade Joe Dallet and renewing our pledge that his life and those of all anti-fascists who have fallen in Spain shall not have been given in vain.

MY FRIEND AND COMRADE

BY STEVE NELSON

Former Lieutenant-Colonel, 15th Brigade

THESE letters of my closest friend and comrade, Joe Dallet, who gave his life in the struggle against fascism in Spain, are so warm, so inspiring and so clear politically, that they hardly need an introduction. In all the letters included in this pamphlet, written between March and September 19, one feels the same strong desire on the part of Joe to get "into action." The desire to get "into action" is not an adventurous impulse but rather is motivated by strong political conviction.

On our way to Spain, a group of 25 of us was arrested in France. During this time all of Joe's comrades in the group, as well as the French people, saw in him an outstanding fighter for democracy. He did not hesitate to tell the French court: "Yes, we are going to Spain, we are going there to assure the Spanish people that they are not fighting single-handed against Mussolini, Hitler and Franco, but, on the contrary, that they have the support of people from all countries."

Every time the group of volunteers was taken from Perpignan to Cerette for examination, Joe would look at the beautiful Pyrenees mountains and would say:

"Look, we are just four miles away from there. We will get there some day."

Joe and his group of 25 did get to Spain. I recall the day when his contingent arrived in Albacete. Though they had only a few days' training, Joe commanded them: "Company attention!" and they all snapped in as though they had been doing this for many years. This effect was largely due to Joe's efforts, for he understood the need for military discipline and quick response to commands.

A leading comrade of the International Brigade who welcomed this group to Spain remarked to me:

"This fellow [pointing at Joe] is capable. There is something about him that tells me that he can play a big part among Americans."

Joe Dallet certainly did that. He was charged with political responsibility at the Officers' Training School, where the largest group of Americans received military training for what later made up the Washington and the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalions. Joe's part in raising the political understanding of these officers was of the greatest importance. In the people's army of Spain every soldier, as well as every officer, must understand *why* he is doing a particular job. He is doing it not merely because of military discipline in the "old army" sense, but *because of conviction*. That is the quality of the people's army of Spain today. That is why it is becoming superior to the mercenaries and slaves of Mussolini and Hitler. It was in this field that Joe contributed all that he had in him to raise the political understanding of the Canadian-American volunteers, and that is why they occupy such an honorable position in the International Brigade in Spain.

Joe has given for the cause of democracy and freedom the most that any one can give—he has given his life. He did it without flinching an eyelash. He did it because he was convinced of the necessity of defeating fascism in Spain, for he knew that if fascism gained in Spain, no peo-

ple in the world would be safe from this monster that is threatening civilization.

Many of us knew Joe "in action" in the United States for a period of eight years, ever since he joined the Communist Party. He played a leading part in the tremendous unemployed struggles in 1930. In the first organization of the Unemployed Councils in Chicago he also played a leading part. He was a central figure in the Steel and Metal Workers Union, the forerunner of the present C.I.O. movement in the steel industry. He was a candidate on the Communist Party ticket in the Youngstown district for many offices: mayor, congressman, etc. He was county organizer of the Youngstown Section.

The workers of Youngstown will not forget Joe. The Spanish people will remember him. His work and his letters are a living monument that shall not be forgotten. The highest tribute that we can pay him is to build the Communist Party, his Party, and to give every bit of assistance to the Spanish people who are struggling to defeat the fascist invasion. If we do this we will defeat our own enemies, the fascists and would-be Hitlers and Mussolinis in the United States.

Personally, it will give me the greatest satisfaction, and I am sure all of the American volunteers in Spain feel likewise, to build the movement to which Joe Dallet belonged as a monument to all of those who fell in Spain. Only then will we be able to say truly: although Joe Dallet is dead, his memory and his work will live on.

DALLET THE ORGANIZER

BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

State Organizer, Communist Party of Ohio

OUR Comrade Joe Dallet died as he lived—in the forefront of action. The sad news of his death by a fascist bullet in Spain shocked not only the members of the Communist Party but deeply affected hundreds of steel workers in Ohio, Pittsburgh, and South Chicago. Joe's death revealed the high caliber of his leadership as a Communist in establishing the strongest ties with the masses and making the Party an integral part of the community. These ties were established during three years of devoted leadership in many struggles involving employed and unemployed steel workers in Youngstown, Warren, Farrell, Steubenville, Weirton, and Newcastle.

The entire city of Youngstown felt that Joe belonged to them. Within a few days a large memorial meeting was organized by the Communist Party. Disregarding the spy system of Republic Steel, fifteen hundred steel workers, Negro and white, entered the hall with bowed heads. The organizations represented by the speakers showed how dear Joe was to everyone. They included the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, the A. F. of L. Central Labor Council, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Communist Party, the Friends of the Lincoln Brigade, the church; several other outstanding trade union and Communist leaders were also among the speakers. Even those who had fought Joe in life, who had denounced him

and who had rejoiced at his arrests, respected him in death. The *Youngstown Vindicator* devoted an editorial to him, and said in part:

"Those who have to do with public affairs frequently have found themselves disagreeing sharply with the causes which Joe Dallet championed, but all of them came to respect the rugged honesty of his character and some of them, at least, came to regard with real affection the earnest personality which looked so straightforwardly out of his brown eyes.

"Whatever may be said of Joe's ideology as a Communist worker, certainly he had a steadfast devotion to an idea which he pursued without regard to the consequences for himself. That he should fall in battle for the cause he cherished, at the head of a charge which he felt was in behalf of liberty and justice to man, is thoroughly typical of his character." (Oct. 21, 1937.)

As a true Communist, Joe Dallet did not wait until the C.I.O. had organized steel. With many others, he worked under the leadership of William Z. Foster, trying to organize the steel workers in 1932-34 into the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, and later assisted the growing progressive forces in the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. In those years, when the field had been abandoned by the A. F. of L., when there was no mighty organized C.I.O. movement, when organizers got no pay, Dallet worked tirelessly—first in McKeesport, then in South Chicago, finally settling in the Mahoning Valley territory, in Ohio.

In every steel town in Ohio, workers in the mills remember the organizing work of Joe. Sometimes it led to strike struggles, as in the Warren mill in September, 1932, or among the Republic chippers in Youngstown in October, 1933. Other times, organization was limited to certain departments with small concessions granted. But in every case it was slow and difficult work. These were all company towns. Joe Dallet was known in all of them, and part of the

organizing work included championing the interests of the unemployed steel workers. In every case it also meant struggle for the democratic right of free speech and assemblage. Republic Steel in Warren prohibited Dallet from ever speaking in that town, but time after time Dallet appeared and spoke to thousands. Sometimes he was arrested but very often he made his escape with the help of the workers. Farrell, Newcastle, and Steubenville all tell the same story. The untiring work of Joe Dallet, together with other progressives and Communists of his type, made it possible for the C.I.O. to carry through its historic organizing work in the steel industry.

During this entire time, Joe worked as a Communist. His work was of a high quality and his spirit never lagged because he was part of a mighty political party which, through thousands of Joe Dallets, had its roots among great masses of workers, and drew strength, courage and inspiration from them, giving them, in turn, the benefit of a growing understanding of Marxism-Leninism. Throughout all these struggles in steel, Joe never hid from the masses the fact that he was a Communist, and this strengthened his position among the people.

Well do we remember Joe after the first news had come from Spain of the work of the International Brigade in helping to defend Madrid. Although Joe was county organizer of the Communist Party in Youngstown, his heart and mind were in Spain. He was not completely satisfied until he could leave to take his place where the fight was hottest.

Joe Dallet is no more. He died as he lived, fighting for the people, for peace, progress, democracy and socialism. A powerful steel union, which he worked so hard to achieve, is now here. The building of a powerful Communist Party among the steel workers is the monument which we must erect to Joe.

LETTERS FROM SPAIN

BY JOE DALLEY

TO HIS WIFE

1.

Perpignan Prison, France

March 30, 1937

Dearest,

Twenty-five of us, seventeen Americans and eight Canadians, were picked up in a French fishing boat Saturday morning in French waters near the Spanish coast. We were just on a pleasure tour but were arrested by the non-intervention commission and have been in a filthy jail since.

We saw our lawyer who appears quite confident that we will be out in a few days. Steve is with me and asks that you write Margaret at once and tell her. The spirit, discipline, etc., of our boys are wonderful in spite of all the hardships, and we are treated splendidly by many political prisoners who were arrested crossing the frontier.

The jail food is uneatable but from tomorrow on we will be having plenty of food sent in by French friends. There is nothing for you to worry about. I will write again as soon as I know more. This letter must pass through the censor so is necessarily limited. We don't get any newspapers here and hardly know what is going on outside, although the lawyer says that our arrest brought

front-page headlines in the French press. We are naturally sore that we were arrested this way when we had done nothing at all wrong but as soon as we are out again and continue on our tour everything will be all right. The Mediterranean is beautiful from a small fishing boat; we had a swell trip until we were stopped.

I am signing off now; it's almost 5 P.M. when we must return to our cells until 7 A.M. There's nothing to worry about only it's rotten being cooped up here when it's so nice outside. We only get two half-hour periods each day to exercise in the prison yard.

We saw beautiful snow-capped mountains and lovely flowering fruit trees in the valleys below during our tour of Southern France. We went for hours in an auto in and out the valleys. Some day you and I must travel this land together and hire us a small sailing boat and sail along the coast. Much love.

JOE

2.

Perpignan Jail, April 2

Dearest,

There is quite a bit of news which I will try to tell you in an orderly manner: (1) The American vice-consul was here to quiz us and tell us that he had instructions from Washington to lift our passports until after our trial. (2) We have had preliminary hearings. Mine was yesterday, and after sticking to my fishy-sounding "tourist" story for over an hour and being threatened with six months extra for "mocking French justice," I finally, under lawyer's instructions, admitted we were going to Spain to work. Our lawyer, who is an S.P., seems convinced that we will get out immediately after our trial, which is set for April 15.

He is also convinced (and here I doubt him) that we will *not* be expelled from France. The preliminary hearings are held at Cerette, 30 kilometers away from here. Today five of our boys (we go there a group of five each day) refused to talk or sign anything unless I was there, and the whole court was held up until the lawyer and a cop had come over here and gotten me in his car and taken me over there. Now it is set that I get out each day to go over with the five that are to be examined. We go in chains but we walk a couple of kilometers each way and it is a good change. Everyone stares and we raise our right fists in salute and more than half of them return the salute. It's swell. My picture was in the Perpignan *Independent* today, taken as I came out of jail, fist raised. A group of railroad workers were reading the paper—they looked from it to me, smiled, nodded and then all saluted at once.

The jail is simply full of political prisoners who give us everything they've got. The outside friends are now sending in food daily (and today sent in also a jug of wine). We are hungry, however, for decent tobacco. Any tobacco, etc., you can send will be appreciated. More than smokes, though, I want letters from you.

Morale and discipline remain high. Our defiance was the talk of the prison—refusing to doff hats when cops entered, etc., unheard of before. We have fought for and won the right to be all together; and we have so much demoralized the prison regime that they have finally segregated us in private quarters, which we are now cleaning up and making really ship-shape with our own KP, sanitary, canteen, discipline, physical-education and general education committee.

Please write often but always remembering the censor. Remember what letters mean to class-war prisoners. Much love.

JOE

P.S. To add to a long list of queer things that have happened: (1) Me sitting at a piano in the room of the concierge of the Cerette Court, playing Chopin to a group including all the gendarmes, the assistant prosecutor, etc. (2) The gendarmes running to catch the last train from Cerette to Perpignan and Steve and I running after them instead of in the opposite direction. Asked if they weren't scared that we'd run away, they smiled, patted their revolver holsters and said "no." (3) Each day when we head towards Cerette we head towards the snow-covered mountains between us and Spain. Cerette is only four kilometers from the border. Yours

JOE

3.

April 6

Kitty darling,

We are putting up a fight for the right to get papers, books, etc., as well as for more time in the courtyard. The news yesterday about the arrest in the mountains of 29 more Americans was disheartening. I don't know yet who they are but I think our lawyer is also defending them and we will soon know more.

Our French friends are now feeding us like kings—three big baskets of food each day, deliciously cooked, with plenty of wine. Some of the guys are now eating better than they have in years. We are practically running our own show within the general bounds of the prison walls, have school twice a day, one hour and a half each time. Outside the jail public opinion on the non-intervention pact is being partially shaped by the big publicity given our arrest, etc. Yesterday one paper carried a fiery protest against the way

we are marched through the streets in chains on our way to the court of preliminary interrogation. Fourteen of us marched yesterday, fists clenched and raised in salute. Everyone knows about the American prisoners and why we are here.

It is damned swell how some of the young non-Party people with us are adapting themselves. Most individualistic traits have already been discarded and the group is functioning in a splendid manner. Naturally we are doing a lot of wondering about what will happen when we get out but we keep sufficiently busy during the day that there is no time for moping.

As far as news is concerned, there isn't much more now. One day is pretty much like another. There's lots of personal things I'd like to say, but the censorship, the lack of privacy even while writing are factors which forbid them. Besides, you know everything. Take care of yourself, sweet.

JOE

4.

Perpignan Jail, April 9, 1937

Dearest,

Your two letters were drunk up as eagerly as I drink the sunlight in our brief half-hour in the prison yard afternoons (the walls are too high for us to get any sun when we go out in the morning).

Important news—our trial has been advanced. It will be held this P.M. and I will not mail this until after sentence is pronounced and we know how things stand. Our lawyer, an S.P. who handles all our cases in this region and has done so for five years, is confident that everything will

be O.K. in every sense of the word, and that we will be out, etc., by the end of the week.

Four Englishmen and one young American got transferred in with us after we put up a bitter fight. They had been lost two days in the mountains and were in bad shape physically and a worse shape morally. But we fed them chicken, pork chops, fish and wine last night (more than they could eat—thanks to our French friends outside who are more than generous). We fought for and won the right to get our razors and shave (for the first time since we're in) and now they're in much better spirits. Our gang is certainly clicking fine and it has had a healthy effect on the others. There is one bad egg among them but we will effectively isolate him.

Steve has been doing a swell job with our class and collectively we've had a good effect on the couple of weaker guys among us. He's a wonderful instructor—really inspiring. In afternoon lectures we've fairly well covered the world labor movement.

This prison is an old monastery or nunnery. The whole layout proves it. The day before yesterday our main dish was veal cutlets and those huge delicious French beans in great quantities. That night the vaulted halls that used to echo with the strains of organ music echoed with a veritable symphony of other sound.

Last night the S.P. and C.P. of Perpignan held a joint demonstration for us. A whole flock of political prisoners have come in within the last few days. Almost every country in the world is now represented and there are some really wonderful guys. A series of thumb-nail sketches of those here, their backgrounds, etc., would make the finest reading. Will try to do something along these lines when I get away. We have a wonderful English kid, T. Freeman, with us whom we added to the top committee of the jail

Soviet and also got him elected head of the English group. Their original captain had no prestige with them.

Continued Saturday morning.

We had our trial, a semi-comic-opera affair, and got twenty days, which means that we get out Friday morning of the same week you receive this. Our lawyer made a really eloquent address. Summarized, it follows: "There are laws and laws, crimes and crimes. Theirs is a political crime—that they loved liberty, democracy and peace. Before this court I want to pay homage to these 25 Americans who left homes, jobs, families and friends to fight for their ideals. Let us not forget 1914 to 1918 when many more Americans came to our beloved country to fight for these same ideals. Every true son of France should pay homage to these prisoners. I beseech this tribunal to temper justice with the greatest mercy and sentence them to 15 days, so that by tomorrow night they can be on their way."

The court was packed with workers as were the streets outside. The three judges seemed to have it all settled beforehand and in two minutes handed down their verdict. Even the prosecutor was far from bloodthirsty. The owner of our fishing boat and the two French seamen with him got suspended sentences of three months and two months respectively. So you see that the People's Front really *does* mean something, even though they do jail anti-fascists. Even better—the judge and prosecutor flatly refused the American Consul's request that he be given our passports. They convinced him that the passports were a necessary part of the dossier of the case and that neither he nor we could have them. The Consul threatened to take it up with the American ambassador, but I think nothing will come out of it. Our solidarity and discipline impressed him so much that he didn't even try to speak to the others this

time but sent for me only. I was polite but non-communicative. He went away empty-handed and empty-headed.

The lawyer has turned out to be a swell guy. He was here just a while ago to tell us the latest news, bring us cigarettes and tobacco and see if there was anything we needed. He was immensely pleased yesterday after the trial when in spite of being handcuffed and the cops trying to pull our arms down, we all went out of the court with raised fists. Men, women and children of every age and description were packed around us, all giving the anti-fascist salute. The cops kept me and Steve to the last, hoping in this way to keep us from setting the example to the others, but every fist went up just the same and stayed up in spite of all threats. It was an inspiring demonstration. The lawyer tells me the papers are full of it and he volunteered to send you a copy. Did he ever send you that picture of me? The photographer yesterday also agreed to send you a picture of yesterday's demonstration.

Please pardon the lousy writing but the pen is terrible, we have no tables and there is such a shortage of paper that I have to write as small as I can. The Johnny Bulls that are with us are tremendously impressed with our discipline and organization and tell us that if their's had been as good they'd be safely over the border instead of in the jug with us. Fifteen hundred people attended the C.P.-S.P. indoor mass meeting here Thursday night in our behalf. The local committee is now weighing the advisability of organizing a meeting to greet us when we come out at which we would speak.

We've made a big impression with our marching through the streets in chains with clenched fists raised. They try to duck all the main streets generally and take us through the back alleys, but Monday 14 of us marched in perfect step, two by two, and in the railway station as well as in

one crowded square we burst into the *Internationale* and many spectators joined in.

I can't describe yesterday's demonstration in Cerette. The whole damned town was out. They waited throughout the trial and were overwhelmingly with us. They wrung our free hands and shouted encouragement, solidarity and real proletarian love. The effect on us was almost intoxicating. I was thinking afterwards that those who, in addition to political understanding, can feel the warm bonds and heart-throbs with and of the masses, can never never get seriously demoralized and never lose faith in the ability of the masses to triumph over all difficulties and obstacles. The attitude of the political prisoners too is an inspiration. A twenty-one-year old German boy, two and one-half years in a concentration camp, his hands, his face, head and body showing the scars of cruel beatings, his eyes sparkling with joy at meeting comrades, undaunted by all his past misery and the terrors of the mountain up ahead, anxious only to get out and over across the line and convinced he can persuade many German fascists to desert. Incidentally, even the French provincial press is full of stories of fascist desertions.

There was a Greek in jail who spoke a lot of English. He claimed to have put in several months in the government army. But his stories did not jibe with those of obviously good comrades who had been on the very front where he claimed to have been. Also he was too bloody inquisitive. So we finally organized his complete ostracization and stuck a sign on his back, *Jaune*, which is the French equivalent of scab or traitor. So solidly did the prisoners stick (and this was when we were in the main bull-pen) that the sign stayed on for over four hours before he found out about it.

The other day an Italian was arrested and testified that he'd been recruited for Spain by reps of the French C.P.,

who offered him 10,000 francs and 50 francs per day to go to Spain. The judges had called me over that day to translate for the Englishmen and afterwards had me sit down in his office so I could read his paper (that day the cops didn't let us read), so I heard the Italian's whole testimony. At the railroad station afterwards I confronted him with his story in front of all the politicians and told them what he'd said. He hung his head and was too scared to speak. We all threatened him and I was surprised how well I was able to curse in French. I found out yesterday when they got him back in jail they beat him up and then completely ostracized him.

There is a Cockney seaman with us now, Bishop—short, built like a gorilla with a chest like a barrel, covered from head to toe with marvelous tattoos—who's a peach. He lost two brothers already in Spain, was caught once two months ago at the border, jailed for 13 days and deported, has a wife and two kids at home to whom he writes almost daily—was caught this time after three nights in the mountains, was hungry all those three days and nights, was beaten up when he tried to get away from the gendarmes, and swears he'll make it next time if he has to crawl the whole way bare-assed on his belly.

Of such stuff is the proletariat made. Incidentally he has a swell sense of humor and knows countless songs of the sea, the struggle for Irish liberation, etc. We have among us a few young guys, inexperienced and raw, who've come forward as really responsible leaders who have definitely established their authority among the others—one a Canadian S.P. who is ready to join us now.

In the busses on the way to court yesterday we travelled through miles of grape country. The two weeks since we've come here have made a great change in the countryside. Brilliant green is bursting everywhere. And we could see

in the infinite care with which the small French peasant has built up rock walls to guard his two-by-four plot in the steep hillside from erosion—another proof of the land-hunger of the peasantry.

I really hope, over and over again, that some day we will have the time, money, and opportunity to loaf a while in this country. In several towns I have made real friends who have begged us to visit them and who would turn their places inside out to make us welcome.

The nights are terribly long. They lock us in at 6 P.M. and we stay there until 6:30 A.M. But Steve and I are in together and we generally talk until about 10, then try to sleep. But you don't have any exercise to amount to anything during the day, so sleeping the whole night through is almost always impossible. French jail bugs are much less numerous than American ones, but still they're enough to give you something to scratch at. Incidentally most of the boys, including myself, broke out quite a bit from the lousy food of the first week, and that's something to scratch. It's not half as bad this time, though, as it was the time you took care of me, and although it still itches like hell it seems to be going away. Much much love to you, my dearest.

Joe

* * *

April 13

Dearest,

There is a proposal (against which I'm fighting hard) that I remain in France to do some work. That'd be a heluva place to be at a time like this. The one redeeming feature about it would be that we could be together. But in spite of that—and you know how much that would mean to me—I'm obviously against it.

5.

Perpignan Jail, April 15

Darling:

It won't be long now. We get out early tomorrow morning. These next hours will undoubtedly drag, but as a whole the time here has passed remarkably quickly. There was never a jail like this, no question on that score.

Today we decorated the walls with slogans, hammers and sickles, etc. The guards came in and had fits, threatened us with extra time in the can. But the chief was wiser and more anxious to get rid of us. He settled the question by having the walls whitewashed while we were out in the yard this afternoon.

JOE.

6.

Midnight, April 16

My love,

Am sitting in a cafe in Perpignan waiting for someone to come for me. Steve has just left me—he is leaving by other channels. The rest of us will be going within the next 48 hours and our friends assure us that there will be no difficulties. One reassuring thing is that since we were caught more than 300 Americans made the trip safely.

Got out of the can at 6 A.M. today. They awoke us at 5 and rushed us into the street to avoid the demonstration that they knew was being prepared.

Yesterday we were notified that we are expelled from France—given eight days to leave and not to return “with-

out permission” under penalty of six months to two years in jail. But here comes the riot! When asked by the police on which frontier we chose to be expelled we replied, “Spanish frontier.” What’s more, the local prefect is seriously considering the question and our lawyer is convinced that there is a good chance we may get away with it. Obviously it’s absurd and impossible, but isn’t it screamingly funny that the government officials should even seriously consider it?

One way or the other, however, we will make it. At the present moment I have 4,500 francs in my pocket and sole responsibility for our whole gang.

Thanks a million for your letters. You have never been so swell about writing and your swellness was never so appreciated. I can’t tell you what this means to me.

All the outside comrades and committees (Party, popular front, Socialist, Anarchist, etc.), are immensely pleased with the work of our group in jail and they are holding it up to all other jailed groups as a model for them to follow. When the Anarchist secretary went out of his way today to praise our discipline, etc., that sort of puts the finishing touches on the general approval. The group voluntarily, spontaneously and unanimously today gave Steve and myself a real rousing vote of thanks and confidence. Also our proceedings in court—making it a clear political case—is to be used as a model on which all other groups are to base their defense.

We are the first American volunteers who are legally in Perpignan—the whole town knows it and is on the streets. But the authorities can’t hinder us here in any way for the next eight days. The next job, of course, is to give them the slip.

I hope, darling, that I haven’t given you the impression of over-much boasting about the work of our group. I

think we can be rightfully proud of how correct Party tactics worked out, and I have told you about it because I know you'll be interested. All yours,

JOE

P.S. Just got fine news—that Steve is as good as over the line—the arrangements are so perfect.

7.

Perpignan, April 19

Dearest:

This is written in the Party office here just after sweating through the enclosed* without (as you can readily see) recourse to either a dictionary or a French grammar. But I think I got the ideas across and that was the point. I have sent the original direct, to be reprinted after we are safely across.

There is not much news now. It is waiting and waiting and waiting. But we are in the unique position of being openly known as volunteers and still being perfectly legal here. Crowds gather round us in the streets. We are the idols of the Y.C.L.ers and the Pioneers. We were guests of honor at a dance given here Saturday night by the local Y.C.L.

Steve went by special route—he is apparently there now. Seven others left yesterday. I must remain until the last. We are hoping that another group of seven will be called today and that my group can leave tomorrow.

Yesterday a group of French comrades came down from

* Enclosed is a letter in French to the editors of *l'Humanite*, thanking the French comrades for everything they did for the group in jail, etc.

the town where we were billeted for five days before making the can. They hunted me up and took me off for a few hours talking. They are crazy about the Americans, especially so since after our bunch left there, some others took our places with whom they had a lot of trouble about drink, women, etc. They think we are the best disciplined of all. They have been closely following all the news in the press about us and were exceptionally friendly. They fell in love with your pictures and again insisted that when all is over you must come there with me for a real visit. They add that we won't have to sleep in straw but in the best feather bed in town.

JOE

8.

Spain, April 22

Dearest,

By the time I write this you should already have my cable saying that all is well. Incidentally, Ralph Bates loaned me part of the money to send it, and it was he who took it to Barcelona to send it off.

Our journey was a masterpiece of organization from every point of view. Our scouts checked every kilometer before we passed over it—our guides took us up and down goat-paths and creek-beds from 10 P.M. until about 5 A.M.—and then we were safely across. Do you know the Pyrenees? They are magnificent, and cruel. Three of our group played out and had to be virtually carried the last half of the trip, and one German also (38 crossed together). Incidentally Bates, a top-shot in the International Brigade, carried one of the guys himself until he almost gave out himself. The

nearly full moon was a big help. Some groups have crossed in such darkness that they couldn't see their footing at all and had to hold on to the coat of the man ahead in order to keep in contact. The length of the trip is caused by the need to skirt all frontier gendarme and non-intervention posts. Sometimes you have to avoid a good road (actually we avoided all roads) and go up and down a mountain to get to the other side of it, instead of simply circling it. The last peak was a 5,000-foot climb over loose and jagged rock, through thick stiff underbrush, etc. And we had to race against sunrise to get over without being seen. I carried a 165-pound guy practically by myself that whole climb. *Christ!* when we crossed the line we almost cried for happiness—some people did cry and I had a hell of a job restraining myself.

I came through in swell shape, only a bit stiff. I'm the only one in our group who didn't go to bed today—I didn't need it and I'll go early tonight. For a while we were afraid that the need to carry the cripples would make us too late to beat the sunrise—and it was a real desperate race.

Never did I see so many stars—and the moon glistened white on the towering snow-capped peaks while down below in the valley the lights of the little French towns made a pattern that was really lovely.

We rest up here for a day or two (are compelled to do so by the authorities in spite of our plea to be allowed to proceed at once to our base) and while here get some preliminary training. Within a few days we'll proceed to the main place.

I've got to start to learn Spanish. Bates promised to organize a good class in it. Incidentally, he's also going to start a paper for the English-speaking columns. He strikes me as a real guy. Our main guide was a marvellous specimen. Perfect rhythmic, measured stride, effortless, never

stumbled, never missed his footing, never dislodged a stone or rustled a leaf. I walked just behind him for a few hours (until I started carrying Bill Wimmer) marvelling at the grace and poetry of his motion. Equally remarkable was his knowledge of every half inch of the twisting terrain. It was a most interesting trip—and so successful I could still holler for joy and if you were here I'd crush the breath out of you.

Here I found out that a lot of top guys who bought me farewell drinks before I left and cursed me for a lucky devil for leaving weeks ahead of them—these same guys have been safely here more than ten days already. We now have a strong staff politically and the general caliber of our recruits arriving is much higher from the point of view of military experience than at the start.

Dearest, a bridge game is about to start; the sheet is nearly filled and the other things I want to tell you can't go through the mail. Except that I adore you and can't wait to reach A. and get your letter.

JOE

9.

Spain, April 25, 1937

Dearest,

This is our fourth day here and I'm just about breaking in. All our boys are rounding into good shape and the authorities are pleased with us. We have a couple more days in this preliminary training camp and then we proceed to the main base. (By the time you get this I hope to be there.)

Our schedule here is the following: 7 A.M. reveille. Wash and then coffee. 8-12 drill; 12-1 freetime; 1 P.M.

lunch; 2-4 rest (and most of the boys lie down and sleep during that time after the tough morning session); 4-5 theoretical (blackboard) instruction; 5-6 drill; 7-8 supper; 8-9 mass singing (with sometimes political discussions); 9 P.M. taps.

The group singing is swell. The Germans make by far the best contributions. They have the best songs, the best voices, the best harmony and they sing with a snap and a zest that is the joy of the rest of the outfit.

Last night the political commissar made us a speech in French, greeting us and reviewing the war situation, the reasons for the International Brigade, our tasks, etc. I translated it into English. He paid a swell compliment to our Perpignan sit-downers which modestly forbids my repeating. The local staff knew all about us before we came and have been especially decent to us, although they handle everybody well.

Some day I can give you a physical description of this place, which is worth many pages. The atmosphere I can indicate. There is strict discipline, but only in connection with drill and rules and regulations. The captain (who speaks German, Spanish, French and Italian fluently and English understandably) and the political commissar eat at our tables (that is, with the privates). They eat the same food. They sing with us in the evening, take a personal interest in the guys, etc., etc. That makes for the kind of loyalty and discipline that money can't buy. There is no such thing as having to salute them every time they pass. Instead it's an exchange of "Hello Comrade" or something of the sort. In his speech last night the commissar pointed this out in passing, in connection with making the point that Mussolini and Hitler are sending plenty of ammunition to Spain but far from enough food for their troops. The war, as you know from the press, has definitely passed into the stage

where on every front it is we who seem to have the initiative.

The country is unbelievably beautiful. From here we see the greenest of fields, the bluest of skies and the whitest of snow-capped mountains. Today we drilled for the first time outside the encampment—going through maneuvers on the hills. All instruction is of a practical nature—not intended for dress parades. The men are all working hard at it and picking it up fast. Tomorrow we go on a 30 kilometer combination hike and maneuver and included in it will be a swim in a nearby river. Inasmuch as there are no bathtubs or showers in the camp, that will be more than welcome. Today after a stiff four-hour drill in a baking sun the captain asked how many were willing to drill another two hours right after lunch. Many of the guys were almost all in but the reply was a unanimous yes. Then he laughed and said he was only asking, but that we needed the rest more than the drill.

The commissar's wife today personally sewed aprons and towels for the barber shop that we established.

Stood my first sentry duty last night—a two-hour shift. It was uneventful but, since it was novel, interesting. Here we are far behind the front and the only possible danger is from an air-raid, although that too is highly improbable at this stage of the game.

The food is simple but well-prepared, good and plentiful. I am sure that I am gaining weight but equally sure that this regime will permit neither pot-belly nor double chin. Have already a pretty good tan from drilling without a shirt. I hope I'm not dull. I don't know how severe the censorship is so I'm leaving out some things. Goodbye, sweet.

JOE

April 28

Dearest Kitty,

This is written in the train about eight hours south of Barcelona, and two to four hours from Valencia (the variance being caused by doubts as to the condition of the track). We are running parallel to the Mediterranean and sometimes only a few yards from it. One sector of the front is only 90 miles west, testimony to which is borne by hordes of soldiers at every station and the presence of many wounded, some of whom are getting on at every station. We haven't yet heard any fighting.

Last night was one of the most thrilling of my life. We marched from the station at Barcelona to the "castle." Entry there found hammers and sickles on all walls, red flags, etc. It is the "Carlos Marx" barracks, headquarters of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (affiliated to the Third International) and of the U.G.T. and U.S.P. and International Brigade troops.

Just as we entered the dining room a military band in full uniform burst into the *Internationale*. All Spanish officers and men, waiters and cooks included, stood at attention and saluted as we came in and sat down. Throughout our supper (which was as near to a feast as war conditions permit) the band played all the revolutionary songs. You have no idea of the effect produced by a first-rate military band (full band at that) playing our songs. Then the Commandant made us a welcoming speech, a few more short stirring speeches by other officers, including some wounded men recently returned from the front, and then the youth section of the barracks took over the evening, sang for us, we sang for them, etc., etc. I can't try to describe it, and won't, other than the brief indications above. But the whole

thing was so unexpected—we came into a Barcelona that was almost entirely dark (for fear of air-raids), that was almost oppressively quiet; we marched in silence through a dark park, past mammoth gates into the castle, and then, all of a sudden, the brilliant color of the flags and posters and the exhilarating blare of the band.

After leaving the mountains of the border region behind us yesterday, and traveling for miles through rich, level, fertile country, we again entered into the harder rockier land of the east central coast. Orange trees now flank both sides of the tracks. At the last stop one of the chaps bought 20 of them for one peseta.

These dashes indicate much elapsed time, during which had a meeting of group captains, commissars, etc., and just now interrupted by a blind soldier coming in playing the *Internationale* on an accordion. We are greeted with cheers at every station. The stations are lined with women, children and wounded, all saluting. There seems to be no note of pessimism or depression. The enthusiasm, the determination at all costs to drive fascism out of Spain is everywhere apparent.

Now we are approaching Valencia.

Sunday night

So bloody much has happened since the above was written that it can't be detailed here.

We are down at the main base—things are going fine and the People's Front government of Spain is obviously doing everything possible for the army and for the International volunteers who are now a part of it. One large batch of Americans was just recently withdrawn from the front lines after 76 days of continuous service—a brilliant record.

Here things are remarkably well organized. Yesterday was

May Day—the strangest and most colorful of my experience. We had a holiday—voted unanimously to donate a half day's free labor to the town here digging a canal for the local water supply—drilled a while in the afternoon and then had a May Day meeting at which representatives of the American, German, Italian, Slavish, Polish and French brigades spoke. In the evening there was a swell fiesta, with first-rate skits put on by the Spaniards, Poles and Americans—the latter stole the show. Afterwards they danced until one while I went to an informal meeting.

JOE

11.

Albacete, May 3

Kitty darling:

Have just been yanked out of the training camp, over my strenuous protests, to spend a week here preparatory to becoming political commissar at the officers' training school which starts next week. I fought, first, to be allowed to spend some time at the front before going to the school and, when this fight was lost, to be allowed at least to stay with my bunch and train at the camp with them until the school began. But I lost both fights and tonight at 5 I was loaded into a truck and brought in. Incidentally, this letter is going by private courier, which makes possible my mentioning the above and also talking more freely with regard to some other questions.

The school assumes particularly important proportions in view of the present political situation here, with Caballero leaning toward the Right, demanding the abolition of

all political commissars except those approved by Caballero. This, of course, is a definite attack on our Party. The Right-wing elements in the government are afraid of our influence in the army, which is growing by leaps and bounds. They are worried about what will happen when the war is over with over 100,000 Communists in the army, etc., etc., etc. The point is that we want to avoid a split with Caballero especially at this time, and we must try to make some of our political guys military guys whom he *must* accept because they are badly needed. That is why I gave in on the question of my going to school at all, even though it means delaying at least for a month the time when I can first go to the front.

We are hearing the swellest stories about our boys in action. One batch was 76 days in the trenches under almost continuous enemy fire, without a single desertion, a record that is hardly matched anywhere in military history. One particular day our bunch went over the top and waded into an unexpected and murderous machine gun fire which wiped out quite a few; the rest took cover behind some olive trees, and, lying there for several hours with the machine gun bullets cutting the trees to pieces and every once in a while nipping one of our guys, there was never a trace of panic—they sang popular songs, smoked and joked until our artillery was able to give them sufficient protection to attain better positions. There are countless stories of wounded boys getting their wounds hurriedly dressed and fighting their way past the field-hospital guards and back into the lines, of our boys almost single-handed rallying retreating government troops and turning defeats into victories. On every hand there is praise for their heroism, their discipline, their organizational and mechanical ability. As a matter of fact—next to the Red pilots—who are national heroes here, our boys get probably more praise than any

others. The English boys, whose forces have been cut to pieces, have also done splendidly. In fact, the brigade as a whole has covered itself with glory.

The fact that we now have so much stronger political forces here than previously is making itself felt. Everywhere our work is picking up. The thousand and one "small things," including mail, cigarettes, papers, improved food and supplies, etc., etc., are now getting organized attention. One can't over-emphasize their importance. During my stay at the training camp I am sure I contributed to the solution of some of these things, including also social and cultural activities there—and they too will help further to improve our situation. Our leading people who are here now spend a considerable portion of their time actually at the front, and those who go up as battalion commissars (political) understand that they necessarily must be right with the boys in the front lines at least a portion of the time, otherwise they cannot properly function. Unfortunately, some of the people we had here earlier didn't always realize this, but now I have full confidence in our leading political staff. Incidentally, the British comrades have worked much better with their leading forces here, with the result that their political leaders, who are or have been here, are really loved by the men. We have splendid relationship between the British and American comrades now, both at the base and in the camps at the front.

Tomorrow I am promised two joys—a hot bath and a crack at a whole file of *American Daily Workers*. I have a lot of studying to do between now and the time that school opens to prepare myself for the commissarship—I must become more or less of an expert on the Spanish situation. During this week, though, I intend to make so much of a pest of myself around here that they finally give in and let me get at least a smell of the front or at least a trip to

Madrid for a day or two. To do either, however, without going in for action with your detachment, you need two things that are difficult to get—a pass and a car. And even when you have the car often you can't get gas. However, I'll do my best.

You probably have noticed that since I left Paris I have lost some of the rank-and-filest tendencies that I had there and before leaving the States. However, the situation does not permit having them and it's a question of jumping in wherever you can do the most good, no matter what your personal inclination might be.

This town was a strange sight this evening. Up to 8 o'clock the streets were so jammed you could hardly walk through them—at 8:30 the lights went out and you couldn't buy a drink in town any place except at the club. It's late and the boys in the room where I am typing are leaving for the front at 4 A.M. so I can't keep them awake any longer. I think of you constantly, my sweet. I haul out your pictures everywhere on the slightest pretext to show you off. Goodnight. All my love.

JOE

12.

May 12

Dearest,

Since last writing I have been out of town a couple of days helping to organize an Anglo-American artillery battery—our first, by the way. There are a swell bunch of guys in it and we expect a lot from them. Work of organizing the school takes up quite a bit of time; tomorrow we are making our last selection of students and by the end of the

week the school will be under way. We have selected the students carefully and expect they will turn out well.

Did my first hitch-hiking in Spain the other day and saved about seven hours by doing so: four hours saved by not waiting for the train that was sure to come late anyway, and three hours by making a trip in one hour that the trains would have taken four hours to make. The difficulties of war play hell with the railroad system. Sometimes the bloody trains (which many times have to burn wood now instead of coal)—the Asturians are too well hemmed in by the fascists—have to stop to get up enough steam to continue and the lines are simply crowded with all sorts of troop, Red Cross, food, and munition trains. The railroad stations are always crowded hours and hours before the train arrives. The International Red Aid has hospital stations in every railway depot where they do wonderful work, handling primarily sick and wounded troops but, if there is also room, handling all other troops which are in motion. They dish out hot coffee at intervals during the night, and gave me my best breakfast in Spain one morning when, in addition to the usual coffee, bread and butter, they also fished out some canned meat.

The Barcelona business has been very much exaggerated in the foreign press. It was started by the Trotskyites (P.O.U.M.) who influenced a very small minority of the C.N.T. and F.A.I. However, the good sign is that nobody will openly defend them; both the C.N.T. and F.A.I. papers have publicly disavowed them, and, while it is impossible to say how far it will go, the responsible heads of the C.N.T. have agreed to make a cleaning out of the C.N.T. If anything more were needed to show the counter-revolutionary role of the Trotskyites, that was probably it.

Bob Minor is back in the country again—he rushed up to the front as soon as he got here. He was accompanied by

Jim Ford who stayed a few days before leaving the country. Jim spoke over the broadcasting system in Madrid while here—a broadcast designed to reach both England and the U.S. Those who heard it say it was excellent. Bob is staying, is overjoyed to be here, and the boys up front were delighted to see him.

A lot of wisecracks are made (including by myself) about the Spanish national watchword "manana," but in spite of it all, things are remarkably efficient when one considers the difficulties of a civil war situation, the countless languages involved, etc., etc. There is no question, among other things, that the people's army of Spain is rounding into a first-rate war machine. Was very interested to learn that new Spanish artillery units are displaying real prowess, such as is not ordinarily expected from an economically backward country.

At the foot of the main drag here is a merry-go-round. How strange it is to hear the mechanical hurdy-gurdy of the merry-go-round grinding out the *Internationale*, *Avanti Popolo*, the Y.C.L. song, the Spanish national anthem which has a lilting swing and melody, etc. Last night we went to see a Soviet movie, "Love and Hate," with Russian dialogue and Spanish sub-titles. Walking home afterwards in the pitch black of night, with anti-aircraft searchlights roving the heavens, it was almost weird to hear the loudspeaker in the square in front of the International Club emitting an American crooner singing a sentimental love song. But anyway I was wishing you were here. It costs 1.35 pesetas to go to the movies here. Much love.

JOE

13.

Albacete, May 17

Dearest,

Today was a rich day. I got three letters from you. I was overjoyed by your desire to come here and work, but I am compelled to say no for the present at least. We have made a decision that no wives are to be allowed to come here unless an emergency arises. It's this way—the boys up in the front lines are naturally prey to all rumors, usual in wars, that at the base the officers are eating, drinking, smoking, etc., they have their wives or other women, etc., etc. Actually, the boys up front get better food, they get first crack at cigarettes, etc., but we must lean over almost backward to deprive them of any excuse for the above stories. The situation may change and allow you and others to come—if so I will notify you at once. You can be sure of that. Personally, I think you'd make a first-rate tank-driver in addition to the other things you've listed.

Have been more active lately, getting the school started, and leave the base tonight to stay at the school until it is over. Was out there several times already. It's situated in a pine forest—isolated from most everything, and is an ideal layout. Three kilometers away there is a swell river and we will swim in it at least several times a week—thus getting what is one of the hardest things to get in Spain, a bath.

JOE

14.

May 18, 1937

Dearest love,

It's just after a very foggy midnight and the stillness of the barracks is disturbed only by the mixed snores of a hundred men, and I have been thinking of you so much these days that I must write before retiring.

Our Commission today examined each prospective student separately. We are rejecting three and the remainder are a fine lot; more or less the cream of the Anglo-American volunteers (excepting that part of the cream which is dead, in hospitals or completely indispensable in the front lines). The course is an intensive one—it requires about fourteen hours' work per day for four weeks and means real work. But it is tremendously interesting and valuable.

There is a young miner here who came all the way from Australia to get into the fight. There's another chap who was at the front for six months, at Madrid, University City, Cordova and Jarama; had his whole outfit wiped out and was never hit—but who finally made the hospital and nearly died as a result of a truck crash while on a two-day leave.

Your letters are a major help. Each time up in the lines that I see a fascist, I am sure that I'll be more effective if I say to myself: "That bastard is trying to keep you away from Kitty." So I'll say it and do my job right.

JOE

May 28

Dearest,

Three letters have come from you this week. I have been having more than full schedule. Reveille at 5:30 A.M. and I never get to bed before midnight, so you can get an idea of it. Crammed into that time are some fourteen hours of classes, drill, manœuvres, etc., plus all the million and one little and big jobs that a bloody commissar always has to do. Ralph Bates says that no sane man would ever take a commissar's job, and I think there is something to it, though he made a pretty good commissar himself. It is not only the morale, the political line, etc., that a commissar is responsible for. For these depend on proper food and proper clothing, and bandages for the feet when the shoes rub, and soap and towels and newspapers and cigarettes and sufficient instruction and not too much instruction and seeing that the canteen carries the favorite drink of each and that the toilets flush and sufficient disinfectant is on hand, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.

But the school is swell—everything you get is the kind of stuff that you can put your teeth into. We have an excellent collection of guys here in the Anglo-American section, most of them with quite a bit of service up front under their belts. The instruction is good, the locality is perfect and it's a healthy and interesting existence.

Saw my first bullfight Sunday. They were far from the high level that I'd anticipated, but they were interesting. Most of our American and English chaps professed great disinterest, horror, etc., but they all stayed until the last of the eight bulls was dead. Some of the "bulls" were heifers, which may have accounted for the pooriness of some of the performances, but anyway they *were* bullfights, and I could

have hardly died happy in Spain, or left Spain alive, without seeing one.

Bob Minor was in town again last week, and Monday night he addressed a meeting of all the Anglo-Americans in Albacete. Afterwards the boys put on a swell home-made vaudeville show and a couple of damned good-looking Spanish girls put on a song and dance act. Tomorrow night here at camp our section is putting on a little show for its own amusement and inviting the other sections to be our guests. We just finished rehearsing a little skit which will be put on by the three military officers of our section and myself which should bring down the house. It's really funny.

Do you remember Mike Wal. from Farrell who was with us at the section school? He arrived the other day. He was one of those who was in jail at Toulouse for 40 days. I had written their group a letter from our jail at Perpignan to encourage them and give them our experiences, but did not know at the time that he was among them. He looked fine and I'm sure he will make a first-rate soldier.

The C.I.O. news is splendid, isn't it? Their progress is really thrilling. We won't know the U.S. when we return. Thanks ever so much for your picture—if you'd send me one a week that would be a real treat. Must close here now—I love you. Will write again in a day or so.

JOE

Albacete, June 9

Dearest,

I don't know whether this letter will follow a lengthy one that I've been writing for the last ten days. I got sudden orders to pack my kit and leave at once and in the excitement that ensued I lost the letter. Well, I was yanked all of a sudden out of my job in training school to take over the political work in the Third American Battalion which that very day we started to form. (The Lincoln Battalion is our first—it is the one which has been doing such glorious work up front for so long. The second is the Washington which, by the time you read this, will also be up front. The third is ours.)

Although green, it is already shaping up in a promising way. We have a fine leadership for it. Bob Merriman, Commander of the First American Battalion, until he was wounded at Jarama, will be the commander and we are having a well-picked staff of military leaders.

The preliminary organization work has run me about ragged, but things are smoothing out a bit now and the result is that on this, my fourth day here, I'm able to take about ten minutes off to say hello to you. We are working to have not only a model military set-up and make it the best-trained battalion that has yet gone up to the front, but also have the best political and cultural set-up as well and the best relationships between the military and political leadership. I am sure we will have this. Anyway I will do my bloody best—I only hope it is somewhere near good enough. It is the biggest job I've ever tackled.

JOE

Thursday, June 10

Darling:

Tonight I have every intention of getting my first full night's sleep in weeks. But before starting I wanted to say hello to you.

I have talked personally to no less than 279 guys in the last day or so on subjects ranging all the way from foot blisters to the fact that their girl was not writing to them, etc. All that has to be solved and all that is the headache of the commissar.

You know that I have worked pretty hard at times in the past, but I can tell you truthfully I never worked harder in my life than I have since we started on the Third Battalion.

But it is fascinating work. You see it taking on more shape, discipline and mobility every hour. The raw recruits who two days ago turned in four different direction at the command of "Right face" today turn as one man and click their heels together in right smart military fashion. We do not put much emphasis on parade ground fancy dress parade, but we *do* stress quick response to command in order to bring about the mobility that is required in action. Already we have started field maneuvers, and it is a real pleasure to see how the boys grab hold of things.

In the letter that you probably didn't get I told you of my last day on the shooting range where we fired the rifle, light machine gun and heavy machine gun. I scored well with all three. Man, what a feeling of power you have when entrenched behind a heavy machine gun! You know how I always enjoyed gangster movies for the mere sound of the machine guns. Then you can imagine my joy at finally being on the business end of one. I'd much rather be a

machine gunner that a battalion political commissar. And if I *must* be the latter, at least I'm going to be a commissar who's a damn good machine gun operator.

I think I mentioned to you in a previous letter the swell French commissar with whom I'd been working. He was battalion commander of the French battalion "Fevrier" at the time when his battalion commandant and the two company commanders were killed, and took over the military leadership of the whole battalion until the battle was over. Later he got it in the head in a charge in which he was fifty meters ahead of the nearest man. Some of his comrades from that battalion have told me that even as he passed out he waved them forward. Two of the guys who went out into no-man's land afterwards to bring him in were killed. Anyway, he is a real swell guy and we became great friends while working together for a few weeks. He was not around at the time I was called over to this job, but as soon as he found out where I was he hopped his motorcycle and came tearing over to find out what he could do to help me get the work going.

Joe

18.

Albacete, June 14

Dearest love,

Ed Flaherty, brother of the Charley Flaherty I have previously written about, was here tonight. He is commander of one company of the Lincoln Battalion, which finally came out of the lines the other day for a real rest. Sam

Belmont is the company clerk of his outfit and Steve Trox is the battalion barber. They have a regular barber shop and canteen right in the front lines—in dugouts, of course.

The other night the Second American battalion, the "George Washington," finally moved up. Moving in the early morning hours, quietly, quickly, efficiently, it was a most impressive spectacle. The actual loading into trucks of men, equipment, etc., of the whole battalion took less than half an hour. It went up by far the best trained International Brigade outfit that ever went into action, and our slogan now in the Third is to equal and surpass the Washington boys.

Am working my ears off. The night the battalion left I only slept an hour and a half and, the night after, our general staff of the new battalion was guest of honor at a war play written and produced by the youth of the Popular Front. It was a swell play, but it didn't start until nearly 11 and didn't end till nearly 1:30, and I had to get up at 5:30 the next morning, so Sunday evening I took off, went to sleep without supper, and slept until 5:30 this morning. It was a major treat.

Things are going well. The boys see that we are doing everything possible not only to train them well, but to make life as pleasant as possible in the training camp, and they are responding splendidly. All kinds of talent comes out in the course of the camp life—it seems that practically every man can contribute something to the general welfare in some way or other, and some are exceedingly able although others, of course, are headaches. We have here now the bunch that was saved when the steamship *City of Barcelona* was sunk by a German submarine right near the Spanish coast—they have already been tested. They tell of some who gave the anti-fascist salute when they were sinking for the third time, and of how others sung the *Inter-*

nationale while clinging to life-preservers waiting to be picked up.

I now live like a real bureaucrat—have a big double bed in a cool, big room all to myself, have to eat at officers' mess at staff headquarters (although a good part of the time I go up and eat with the men), wear a Sam Browne belt which our battalion commander, Bob Merriman, bought himself when I wouldn't get one, and forced over my head, etc. This training camp is one of the best in Spain—it has running water in all the barracks (swell buildings that once were private houses and now house 50 to 100 men). You should see the tiled inlaid floors. One courtyard of a barracks has a fountain with goldfish 'n everything.

JOE

19.

June 15

Dearest,

Don't know whether or not I told you that Sunday morning our whole battalion went into the fields and donated a half day's labor to the Popular Front, cutting barley. Our boys looked like a bunch of Fifth Avenue farmers, but we *did* the work and the local residents were immensely pleased and grateful. The land we harvested was the property of the government, being confiscated from the fascist landlords. Such things are a good political education for our boys and they help a lot to make our battalion welcome in the town. Incidentally, the boys voted unanimously in favor of doing the work in the first place. This morning the men chipped in some 700 pesetas for the battalion canteen fund.

Keep up the rapid writing—it's swell. Yours,

JOE

48

20.

June 21 to 25

Dearest:

Haven't heard from you in a blooming week and miss your letters no end. Do something about it please. Got a letter from Phil which I am sending on to you. All the dirty work you did for years, cranking leaflets, passing them out in snow and sun, visiting contacts, etc., was not in vain. Everything we worked for for years is coming true in steel.

Things are shaping up well with our battalion. Each day I go out on maneuvers with a different company. This way I have the best chance to learn what's what among the boys, to pick up the most military knowledge, and to see how the companies are shaping up. Have had a couple of damned interesting lectures the last few days—Merriman on the training period and first days in the life of the Lincoln Battalion, and last night Hourihan, Commander of the Lincoln Battalion since Merriman was hit, on the last few months of the Lincoln. The in-between periods will be covered later by Merriman. The guys were very attentive and much impressed. Singing, marching and general work are picking up daily and the way they work at the maneuvers is a pleasure to see.

Most of the companies have gotten out their first wall-papers, and some are real good, especially for first attempts. We are holding a conference of wall-paper editors within a few days to discuss the first issue. Spirit is especially high in relation to the socialist competition that has been launched between companies and sections for the winning of the battalion banner and the company banners. The scoring system is based on work along fifteen different fields and that company or section which scores highest for the

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week earns the right to carry the banner and march first on parade during the ensuing week.

Last night the machine gun company threw a swell party for the battalion staff. It was held in the patio of their barracks—tables and walls were decorated with slogans, and in the center of the square of tables, freshly cleaned and beautifully draped in red, was their pride and joy, their love, their machine gun. Some of the guys had prepared newly written songs, skits, etc., for the occasion. There were no speeches, and the absence of the latter, combined with excellent management, made it one of the best parties I've ever attended.

Found a novel swimming place in the river this week. Like most Spanish rivers, this is exceedingly swift. But I found a place where after a sharp turn in the river a back-eddy is created that makes the river flow up stream for about 50 feet. So you shoot down the river at a whirling speed, stroke ferociously to pull yourself out of the main stream, and then go up stream at almost equally great speed until you have completed the strange circuit. It is no end of fun and once again I wished for you to be present. Have had three short swims in the last week, which is certainly a good record.

By the way, up front now they have a traveling shower-bath. The water tank is mounted on a truck, the showers unfold off the side, and dust-laden crummy guys can get clean within a few meters of the front lines.

JOE

June 30

Dearest darling:

Things are going swell. We have really got the socialist competition going between companies and today awarded the battalion banner climaxing the first week of the competition. Company I won it this time but it was close and the chances are that they will lose it next week. On the 10th we are holding a big affair jointly with the unified Socialist Youth League. Edwin Rolfe is writing a mass chant which someone will translate into Spanish and it will be chanted by a mass chorus of 50/50 Spaniards and us. There will be several skits, based on local and battalion events and mainly in pantomime, which goes over best with the Spaniards and our own people too for you can't keep 2,000 kids out and they make too much noise when the dialogue is in English for anybody to hear it, even the actors. The companies are developing some swell initiative as to methods of work in political work—spelling bees in which instead of spelling the guys gather in a circle and answer questions like how many men in a group and why and what is their function; what parts in a rifle; why this or that kind of formation, etc. They all kick in a peseta in a pot before they start and the last one left takes the pot. They also play sticking the tail on the donkey, but they are not blindfolded and instead of a tail they have paper pieces that fit into a large cross-section drawing of a rifle and they have to stick the piece in the right place. They do lots more things, all during their free time, which keeps them out of trouble and at the same time makes them better soldiers.

Wars are funny things and especially wars in Spain and there's a million interesting things that some day I'll be

able to tell you. Met Ludwig Renn yesterday, a gauntish man with kind eyes who speaks quite good English though with an accent and whom, they say, the men absolutely adore and would do anything for.

Our battalion now has a four-cylinder Ford with a V-8 chassis and we chug along in great style.

Yesterday was in Albacete to get a picture taken for you and even had a shave first to look my best for you. But there is no film available for the minute, so you will have to wait. For awhile I had a beautiful 44 side-cannon, but the guy remembered where he'd left it, so I lost the gun for which you can't buy ammunition anywhere in Spain—only you don't need ammunition for the other guy sees it pointing at him and runs.

I'm going to sleep. When I'm this tired I snore and if you were around you'd quietly say, "Joe," and I'd stop but you're not around. Much much love,

JOE

22.

July 9, 1937

Dearest:

Don't think I have yet told you that our battalion was finally named the McKenzie-Papineau Battalion. The name is Canadian and has the same significance for Canadians that Jefferson, etc., have for the Americans. The problem was that the Canadians have done wonderful work for Spain. Canadians have fought splendidly in many battalions here but always their national origin and national traditions have been swamped in the publicity splurges for the Lincoln Battalion, etc., for up to now they have

never had a battalion of their own. Eventually, probably most Canadians now at the front will be transferred in with us in exchange for Americans now in, but in the meantime the Canadian movement has something in Spain to rally around in the same way that in America they have been able to build up the Friends of the Lincoln Brigade. The Americans took it fine, and voted unanimously for it. The Canadian comrades, who are a fine lot, are blissfully happy at having won their objective.

The battalion gets better every day (I guess I sound like a proud father) and I am sure they will conduct themselves well at the front. Incidentally, the Canadians have agreed that in spite of the change in name, the military and political leadership of the battalion remains the same, for the time being.

JOE

23.

July 19th

Dearest,

Wonderful news. You can come. Get in touch with Jack in Paris, for whom I enclose a note, and he will put you through. I have no time to write any more now, I love you.

JOE

July 25th

Dearest,

Training a battalion is very much like training a football team in some ways. You know you have a certain minimum period in which to prepare the men. Into that period you must pack the maximum possible. At the end of that period, if you have worked as we have, you are set to go, and what is more, the boys are set to go. That period ended with the ending of our four-day maneuver. Now the boys are set, they are waiting for the word, and the danger exists that, lacking the word, with the suspense naturally accumulating, they will go stale. We are alert to the danger, and are taking a whole series of steps to avoid it. But it requires plenty of work, though of a somewhat different character. We are cutting down somewhat on the heavy work, although giving enough to continue hardening up and to keep in trim. Especially are we cutting down on the heavy work during the blazing heat of midday and afternoon, and packing most work now into the early morning up to 11, and in the night, with night maneuvers most nights.

Simultaneously we are trying not only to introduce new things into the training (and there are plenty of new things we can well afford to spend time on, if we have the time) but also to make it more interesting by means of introducing more competitions, etc. For example, on night maneuvers we are pitting one company directly against another, in mimic warfare. The winning companies in the first nights meet for the final competition. This week we are starting volley ball, soccer and soft ball tournaments, with each section entering teams. Tomorrow we are taking the whole battalion out on a long still march (combined with

scouting, etc.) which ends up at the river bank where the boys can swim. We'll spend most of the day out there, have a lecture right there on the river bank, and march back in the cool of evening. Our field kitchen will be sent in advance to prepare a good meal right on the river bank, which gives the cook staff practice at that sort of thing, and the boys will have both a good workout and a good time.

All this, my sweet, is part of political work in the battalion. It was the political department which raised this question sharply in the battalion military staff, but the singular joy of working in this battalion is that the staff agreed completely on the whole question. Indeed, frankness necessitates my saying that, hard though I work, the best political work in the battalion is still done by Bob Merriman, even though he is in a military position. He has a political approach to every military question and it is that, together with the fact that as a human being he is a swell guy, which makes the working relationship with him so pleasant. I have learned plenty about political as well as military work from him, and am continuing to do so.

Marion promises to do everything possible for you if and when she sees you. I assume that you got my last letter in which I said that the answer finally is "yes" and enclosed a note to Jack. I am overjoyed, even though I did not go into details about that in the last letter, and I can't wait to hear your plans. Bill was also swell and said that he will do anything he can to help.

Ralph Bates was here this week and made one of the finest speeches I have ever heard to the battalion—on the development of the Spanish People's Army from its beginning to now. It was packed with facts, many of which were new (in their details) to me, and was so high-powered that many of the guys had tears in their eyes when he recounted

some of the tales of the heroism of the Spanish people, of how the entire Executive Committee of the Madrid C.P. went over the top on the famous night of Nov. 7 when Franco was checked at Madrid; about how 200 women of Madrid laundered all the clothes of the defenders of Madrid from Nov. to Feb. without a cent of pay, plus countless other anecdotes and stories with which he illustrated some of the most dramatic political history of all time.

Got a swell new automatic this week, a Belgian Browning 9 mm. The clip holds 8 and you can put another in the breech. I shot it today for the first time; it balances fine in the hand and is very accurate. Sometimes very nice-looking guns are not too accurate, so I was well pleased when I found I could plink the target with ease. Now the problem is getting ammunition for it. 9mm. short is not a common calibre in Spain. There is no ammunition sold in stores, all must be gotten through the army channels, and while they have plenty for the 7.65s, they are very chary about dishing out the 9s. Incidentally, a good friend of mine (so good a friend he was wearing my boots when it happened) shot himself through the foot the other day while cleaning his automatic. He is a veteran from the Lincoln battalion, a seasoned soldier, and still he did that. It was a good lesson for all of us and I assure you that we are extra careful now as a result of it.

More good reports about Johnny Gates—some officers from his battalion say that not only is he now a Brigade Commissar (the highest post held by an American here) but further they think he is in line for the job of Division Commander. Strange, eh? But Spain is a funny place. Some of the best people at home crack up badly here and some of the least significant ones from home come through with flying colors. You can see men changing before your eyes, and they say that up front the changes sometimes come

so fast you can't even see them—they just have happened, that's all. It's a bloody interesting country, a bloody interesting war and the most bloody interesting job of all the bloody interesting jobs I've ever had, to give the fascists a real bloody licking.

JOE

25.

July 29, 1:10 a.m.

Dearest,

Have just gotten through work for the night and want to drop you a few lines before going to sleep.

We had a two-day maneuver out to the river. The battalion did a couple of forced marches, a fine night maneuver which clicked perfectly, and we took quite a few hills without any casualties whatsoever. In addition, the spot we picked on the river had the best swimming that we've yet found in Spain and the boys made the most of it. They had a picnic and didn't want to come back to camp at all. Furthermore, the quartermaster's department learned from the experience of the last maneuver and did a perfect job of feeding the battalion, good food and plenty of it. And that guy Napoleon was no dummy when he said that an army marches on its belly.

There is still no word about when we go up. In the meantime we are making full use of all the extra time for training. Today after the stiff work of yesterday we let the boys have it easy, and this afternoon we all had our pictures taken. The photographer didn't have another plate left

or I'd have had a regular individual picture taken for you. Maybe these won't be printed for quite a long time, too, since he hasn't got the necessary paper. But I'll do my best to get one to you anyway. Although you sure never married me for looks and you must love me a lot to want one.

JOE

26.

August 1

Dearest,

I just got your letter of the 25th. This is being written on what I gather to be a German Royal so all mistakes are due to it. Anyway our having it is a marvel. It is the first decent machine we have been able to acquire for ourselves, and our getting it is due to some first-rate wrangling which Bob and I did at the General Staff plus over half an hour of swearing in Spanish and French simultaneously at the store-keeper at the International Brigade warehouse, who first swore he had no machines to fill the order we had from G.H.Q. and then, after much swearing, threats, etc., tried to palm off on us all kinds of old broken-down specimens. We finally got this new one, but I have far from solved the mysteries of its keyboard as you will very well see.

I do hope that you will continue the splendid practice of sending me snaps each week, only you are not sufficiently religious about keeping it strictly once a week—sometimes two weeks go by without one. I have all the snaps mounted in a little pocket photo album which I carry in my shirt pocket in my union card case all the time. I need less than no excuse at all to demonstrate you to all and sundry if they are good guys.

I can't tell you yet what division I'll be in or what army corps. There is certain reorganization going on in connection with strengthening the whole Spanish Republican Army which makes some of this unpredictable. However, we will surely be in the 15th Brigade in which will also be all other English-speaking units including the British and American battalions. Incidentally, the tone of most of the American press toward our boys here is remarkably respectful.

This last week-end was a sports week-end for the battalion. Our battalion staff team reached the semi-finals in mushball and horseshoe pitching. However, we lost to Company I, the winners in both events. I played first base and was with Bob on our horseshoe team. In the latter, after going great guns for a while, we ran up against a couple of Iowa farmers who took our pants down in full view of the whole battalion in spite of our efforts to convince them that it was bad for the prestige of the leadership for them to beat us so unmercifully. Those guys could make the horseshoes not only talk but also throw ringers which would settle down around the stake, lie there for a minute, and then rise unassisted and fly right back into their hands. You should have seen it.

Last night the boys put on the best show the battalion has had, including several very good skits, one serious wrestling match between the ex-champion of Finland and the ex-champion of the U.S. Navy, and a burlesque between two guys who were great acrobats, excellent wrestlers and better actors. They threw each other all around the ring with proper grunts, groans, and facial contortions and, finally, as they were rending each other limb from limb and were in the death throes of their agony—or vice versa—your hero, the referee, dove in head first to separate them so they could each die separately in peace, and all the seconds, coaches,

managers, handlers, masseurs, etc., dove in on top of all of us and the curtain rang down amidst scenes of wildest hilarity.

I'm terribly worried about your appendix, dearest. Why in god's name does it have to pop now? Please have it fixed up immediately so you can start your trip here.

JOE

27.

August 17

Dearest,

Since last writing I have seen Steve both up near Madrid and here, and the day before yesterday imagine my shout of joy at seeing Mack coming down the stairs of the International Club at Albacete. He has been with the Edgar Andre battalion as a machine gunner, then as chief of a machine gun crew, was shot in the hip toward the end of June and has recently been discharged from the hospital and will pretty soon be fit for service again. He is going to spend a couple of days visiting our battalion. He looks fine, except for the limp, after gaining quite a few pounds and getting thoroughly brown in the hospital. He is in excellent spirits.

Our battalion is still back of the lines in training, and now it looks as though we'll stay here yet awhile, although one never can tell.

I'm leaving in a few hours for Madrid region, where the Brigade to which we'll be attached is located, for conference with Steve and others. Will be back in a couple of days. Think I told you that when I was in Madrid last time (which was also my first time) there was no bombarding at all except for some three shells that landed many kilometers away. I don't want Madrid bombarded at all, but if

it *must* happen. I hope it happens while I am there.

Incidentally, Bob Merriman has been promoted to a leading position in the brigade staff and Marion has gone back to work in Albacete. That is where you will find her, and it would be best to send her a wire from Paris telling when to expect you, just before you leave.

Take care of yourself—good luck in the operation—all my love.

JOE

28.

Sept. 3

Kitty dearest,

Just a line to say that all goes well—got several letters and cards which you sent from Paris and which made me very happy. I hope you're recovering quickly and that things will work out so that we'll see each other soon.

JOE

29.

Sept. 15

Dearest,

I haven't written much lately for several reasons: I hope to be seeing you soon and that makes writing seem rather unnecessary; and, secondly, we've been busier than ever before what with receiving several hundred Spanish troops

into our battalion, all green recruits, and with starting to train them, "standing by" twice, then moving with them up to the brigade and around quite a bit in reserve position.

We are now up with the brigade which is resting after doing a brilliant job at Quinto and Belchite, the best job our boys have done yet in Spain, which is saying a lot.

The fact that I have not heard from you since your operation is beginning to become a source of anxiety, although the reasons for it are probably quite natural. I'll be glad when I get a letter which assures me that you are well and getting ready for the trip. Marion promised to write you telling you what to bring.

Since the Spaniards are in the battalion I am finally beginning to learn the language and at least understand quite a bit of what they say when they speak slowly.

Writing this in an olive grove by candle light with artillery and avion bombing rumbling in the distance. It is all quite picturesque. Now I must close. Some guys are waiting for me. Much love.

JOE.

30.

(No date)

Kitty darling,

I've been a louse about writing but there was no sure way to reach you and anyway we've been on the jump. Now we're waiting for the convoy—by the time you get this we'll be in action. We are in shape and will do our best.

Writing this by flashlight. I hope that by the time we

get out of the lines you'll be in the country to spend a few days' leave with me.

Until we meet—

JOE

* * *

There were no more letters. He went into action, and he did his best.

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